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UP FRONT
Lindbergh salt plant production is still on hold as the facility undergoes repairs..... Page 3

COUNTY
The County of St. Paul is at "moderate risk" for wildfires, with education the key to reduction.....Page 5

Elk Point Review

Vol. 38 No. 9 Tuesday, February 19, 2019 $1.50 GST Included

Rural family home lost in late night fire

John Neufeld photo

FULLY ENGULFED - A massive home southwest of Elk Point that was once the pride and joy of the late John Dahmer and his wife Donna went up in flames early last week, leaving its present owners, Abe and Anna Neufeld and their family, homeless.

MEREDITH KERR
Review Contributor

A family of seven who lived south of Elk Point is now living in a rental property in town after a fire the night of Feb. 12 destroyed their home. Their two dogs, a Golden Retriever cross and a German Shepherd cross are both safe.

John Neufeld, is the person who discovered the fire around 1:30 a.m.

"I could see flames and hear the crackling of the wood burning. I was so shocked, I looked outside and see a big fire right outside my window. I woke everybody up and ran downstairs and it was the doghouse on fire," said Neufeld.

Asleep in the home at the time of the fire were Abe (48) and Anna (44) Neufeld, and their five children, John (24), Agatha (22), Abe Jr. (17), Anna (15), and Corny (10). Margaret Reddekopp (26) also lives with the family. She was working a night shift at the Elk Point Heritage Lodge when the fire happened.

"We ran and got a fire extinguisher, and we got most of it out. The house was just about out, but then we ran out of fire extinguisher and there was still fire inside the doghouse. That restarted again and after that we couldn't do nothing. Just ran back inside and grabbed our small possessions we thought were valuable and some clothes and ran outside and watched her burn," said Neufeld.

Asked what he grabbed from his room before leaving the house, Neufeld said, "I'm just starting to fly, with my pilot's license and stuff. So I grabbed my logbook for my aircraft that I bought. It comes with two logbooks so one got burned, and I grabbed my headset to fly the aircraft and my Bible." *(Continued on Page 2)*

Files drop, property crimes up, RCMP tells council

VICKI BROOKER
Review Staff

Elk Point RCMP Cpl. Bobby Burgess visited Elk Point Town Council's Feb. 11 meeting with an update on the new detachment building and crime statistics in the area.

The new detachment is "still a work in progress," he reported. "The contractors have been back about 15 times since we moved in. It's all little things," such as missing weather stripping, and he predicts that "by April everything will be functional."

The grand opening will be held "sometime in the spring," and the flags will be raised when missing keys for the flagpoles are located, he said, with council readily agreeing to his request for a Town flag to add to the display.

The former detachment location is being decommissioned and sold, Burgess told council, and Cst. Cindy Timanson will be transferred to Ft. St. John in the near future. Cst. Desaulniers is the acting corporal at this point, with Burgess heading the detachment until the new commander takes over, although he is up for transfer in July. He indicated that Cpl. Dave Henry, currently the detachment commander in Two Hills, will be Elk Point's new sergeant.

Burgess reported that a new Intermunicipal crime prevention initiative, a three-year enhanced policing model involving the M.D. and town of Bonnyville, Cold Lake and the Elizabeth and Fishing Lake Métis Settlements and supporting the efforts of the Regional Eastern Alberta District Rural Crime Detection Unit is in the planning stages and would focus on property crimes.

In the Elk Point Detachment area, Burgess said crime statistics are "actually down, from 2,969 in 2017 to 2,913 in 2018, a drop of 56 files. Our members are averaging 485 files for the year, a pretty big load." Violent persons crimes are "about the same, going from 405 to 393, and there were five homicides this year compared to four last year. Property related crimes were up from 862 to 943." There was a huge drop in unwarranted 911 calls, he noted, from 522 in 2017 to about 100 in 2018, which he suspects is because today's phones aren't as conducive to "pocket dialing" as their predecessors were.

The hope of having extra RCMP members for Frog Lake is not feasible at this time, due to financial constraints, although the detachment has been offered space in the new fire hall, and they do have a spot at Fishing Lake in the new administration building there, Burgess said.

There has been a recent reduction in files, he concluded, possibly due to the cold weather and the fact that some prolific offenders have recently been put away. The detachment is currently keeping an eye on copper wire theft.

EDC appointments

A list of 13 potential volunteers hoping to become voting members of Elk Point's new Economic Development Committee was ranked in order of preference by Mayor Lorne Young and council since the last council meeting. *(Continued on Page 2)*

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CHARRED RUBBLE and scattered timbers all that remains of the large two-storey home devastated by fire last week. Tamara Sherwin photo

THE NEUFELD FAMILY is currently residing in Elk Point, until they can build a new home on the property. Submitted photo

Neufelds

(Continued from Front Page)

His sister Anna, 15, took her guitar and a photograph of their grandparents from Bolivia. The Neufelds emigrated from Bolivia to Manitoba in 2003 before moving to the Two Hills area in 2008. They had been living in the house south of Elk Point for just shy of two years.

According to Neufeld, they believe the cause of the fire was a heat lamp inside the doghouse.

"It's been cold these last few weeks and our dogs were outside farm dogs, but they were cold. So we figured we'd get something going for them so they could get it warmer. So we got a nice heat bulb system with a metal frame around it, very safe, we thought it was very safe. And we hung it up in there," said Neufeld. He wasn't sure if there had been a short in the circuit or if the lamp had simply overheated.

According to Peter Hewitt, the chief of the Elk Point Fire Department, the structure was fully engulfed when the department arrived.

"They fought the fire as best they could, but that's it. They were hampered by the cold obviously, temperatures were close to -40 by the time they got there," said Hewitt.

Hewitt didn't have the exact time the fire department arrived on scene available to him at the time of the interview, but he said the initial call came in at approximately 2:40 a.m. He was not one of the members to respond and could only comment from what he had been told after the fact.

According to Hewitt, the fire was a total loss. "The only thing that got saved was the garage."

"There was a shortage of water. One of our drivers returned to the hall four times to fill up with water and St. Paul as well returned to our hall to fill up. There was no fire hydrants out there," said Hewitt.

St. Paul Fire Chief Trevor Kotowich confirmed two firefighters from St. Paul responded with a tanker truck under the mutual aid agreement they have with the Elk Point Fire Department.

Hewitt said Elk Point is thankful St. Paul was able to assist, "Especially at that time of day. We're a volunteer fire department, so out of 18 members we can't always all respond."

Asked if the cold weather changed the way the fire department approached the fire, Hewitt said it didn't impact what they actually did to fight it.

We have to make sure our vehicles are thawed out, make sure we have enough coolant and antifreeze in the lines. Being as cold as that, we have to take many breaks, take turns on the gun, just to be on the safe side. We've had incidents in the last three days with traffic accidents where we've had to be in and out of the trucks more than we're used to," said Hewitt.

Since the fire, the Neufelds have been receiving help from the Elk Point community and from their church, Hillside Christian Fellowship in Willingdon.

"They've set up a WhatsApp group to ask for stuff like beds and stuff to lend and to give to us for the time period we need until we get a new house built on that other property from the insurance company," said Neufeld.

"Bumper to Bumper donated shoes, work shoes for us, the steel toed boots so we can stay working," said Neufeld, who works at Hahn Welding and Oilfield Services.

He said the Red Cross was able to get them set up in a motel right the night of the fire and the community of Elk Point had helped them find a home to live in for the foreseeable future. Staff at Servus Credit Union collected clothes and toys for his brothers, while Rona donated new cords to plug the vehicles in with.

One of the firefighters from the Elk Point Fire Department is taking care of the dogs.

"A big thank you for all the people who've given us their support. We just pray God will bless them all, because we really appreciate all the help that's been given to us. There's not many words that can speak how big the thank you is for all that," said Neufeld.

The spacious home was originally built by John and Donna Dahmer in the 1980s. John Dahmer was elected as a Member of Parliament inn 1988 and died of cancer less than a week after the election.

His widow and her second husband, Paul Chamberland, sold the property to the Neufelds when they retired to Edmonton.

Town council

(Continued from Front Page)

CAO Ken Gwozdz tabulated the results. The eight volunteers chosen, Curtis Porcina, Ryan Hahn, Dwayne Vogel, Twila Stafford, Travis Warawa, John Zhang, Brant Evans and Tyson Ballas, were subsequently appointed to the committee. The others will be notified that they may attend the EDC meetings as non-voting members.

Alta Gas

A motion regarding continued AltaGas service versus the possibility of forming a gas co-op that had been tabled at the Dec. 10. 2018 council meeting was brought back to the table, and has now been tabled for reconsideration some time in 2021.

Alcohol at town functions

A motion at the Jan. 14 council meeting to have a policy brought forward regarding the purchase of alcohol for town functions resulted in a pair of revised policies that were not related to town-hosted functions, but "the intent wasn't in there at all," Coun. Terri Hampson said, as the revisions added a clause to both the remuneration and personnel policies stating: "Alcohol and alcoholic beverages are not eligible expenses" for remuneration. Those revisions were passed, and the intended policy stating that the Town would not contribute funds toward the purchase of alcohol for town functions will be developed for the March 25 meeting.

Bylaw revisions

Revisions to the Noise Bylaw passed in 2011 were brought forward, but more revisions, some dealing with outdated language, are needed and the further revised version will be brought to the Feb. 25 meeting.

Draft of a new Traffic Safety Act Bylaw 799/19, replacing Traffic Safety Act 606/99 and its amendments 748/16 and 761/17 and reflecting the new Traffic Safety Act Legislation was brought to council and passed all three readings after some wording changes and increases in seasonal parking time from 72 to 96 hours (three days to four days), and parking of any vehicle on any highway from 48 hours to 72 hours, plus the addition of a clause stating that, "No person shall obstruct or overhang within the sidewalk, boulevard or highway with a slide out of a recreational vehicle." A revised fee schedule is part of the new bylaw.

The revision of the Snow Removal Bylaw passed in 1996 changes the definition of a person from an owner or occupier to "any individual, firm, partnership, association, corporation, trustee, executor, administrator or other legal representative," removes the word "metal" from the type of instrument restricted from causing injury to sidewalks, and the term "double registered" from the way an offense ticket can be sent. The provision for used of an ice melting product was added, rather than prohibiting all chemicals for use on sidewalks. This also received all three readings.

Snowmobile Rally

Council voted to donate a door prize to the Elk Point Trail Riders Vintage Snowmobile Trail Ride, Show and Sine on March 2.

Delegation Request

A form requesting permission for a delegation to appear at a regular or special town council meeting received council's approval. Under the town's procedural bylaw, it is a requirement to have documentation of such requests, "It strikes the right balance," Mayor Young said, "and it's an easy way to access council."

Genesis AGM

An invitation to attend the annual general meeting for Genesis Reciprocal Insurance Exchange in Edmonton was discussed. Genesis is the insurer with the water commission. Council agreed to send a proxy vote instead of attending the meeting.

CAO report

CAO Gwozdz told council the town's audit will take place from Feb. 25 to March 1. He anticipates a small surplus from 2018 that will be confirmed in mid March. Assessment is anticipated in March, and there may be appeals.

The schedule for the Intermunicipal Development Plan has shifted, Gwozdz said, with the meeting with council now set for an April council meeting rather than February or March.

Administration is now in the process of drafting a lease for the Elk Point Curling Association for the town-owned building, on which the town pays the insurance.

The $5,000 donation from CNRL for the airport lighting project has been received. County Couns. Darrell Younghans and Kevin Wirsta will meet with the landowner whose trees are impacting the runway. The airport operating lease has been signed by both the town and county.

A draft street light policy is being drafted for the CARES Grant street lighting project, which is managed by the Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay

The report on the Recreation Feasibility Study has been presented to the four municipal councils, and the four CAOs will meet with RC Strategies to discuss the next steps and release of the study.

Gwozdz congratulated Kyle Attanasio of the County of St. Paul, with whose assistance the region has obtained three ACO grants, the $200,000 Regional Storm Water Management Study between Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay, County of St. Paul and Town of Elk Point, $150,000 for Regional Human Resource Management Framework project for all four municipalities and $125,000 for Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan for three municipalities.

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NE 5-54-6-W4: Approx 140 C/A, Assessment of $30,890
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NE 6-54-6-W4 Approx 135.87 Acres, Assessment of $26,190
County of Two Hills

NE 17-56-8-W4 156.88 Acres +/-, Assessment of $13,650
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Production at Lindbergh salt plant still on hold as facility undergoes repairs

CLARE GAUVREAU
Review Staff

Production at the Windsor Salt plant in Lindbergh has been shut down since November of last year after the plant sustained some structural damage. The nature of the damage or how long it will take to repair is not being disclosed by the plant's owners Morton Salt, Inc, headquartered in Chicago, IL.

"At Windsor Salt, nothing is more important than the safety of our employees. That's why we immediately halted production at our Lindbergh site in November 2018 due to structural damage that developed in our main production area," company spokesman Paul Jackiewicz said in a statement to the Elk Point Review last week.

"Repairs have been underway since late November in order to bring the site back to full operational capacity in a safe and timely manner. Given the nature of the structural damage and complexity of the repairs, we cannot provide an exact timetable on when operations will fully resume. As a result, 19 employees remain on layoff. We have 55 full-time employees at the site."

Jackiewicz said the company is committed to continuing production at its Lindbergh site, where it has operated for more than 65 years.

The Lindbergh plant is one of only two operated by the company in western Canada, with the other located in Saskatchewan, near Regina. Both are described as evaporation sites and involve water being pumped into an underground salt deposit. The salt dissolves and is pumped back to the surface as saturated brine, which is then boiled in a series of vacuum pans. Salt crystals fall to the bottom of the pan as a slurry which is then dried and packaged, according to the company's website.

"Our Lindbergh site produces culinary and water softening products as well as industrial salts primarily for western Canada." Jackiewicz explained.

Morton Salt's parent company is German-based K+S Aktiengesellschaft, recognized as a world leader in the production of salt and supplier of standard and specialty fertilizers.

Historical significance to the region

The Lindbergh plant has long been a fixture on the region's landscape, nestled in the Lindbergh valley east of Elk Point. The Elk Point Historical Society website provides several references to the plant's early years and tells an interesting story of its significance to the Elk Point area.

"The story of its development goes back to the years 1945-1946 when three oil companies, the Anglo-Canadian Oil Company Ltd., Home Oil Company Ltd., and Calgary and Edmonton Corporation were wildcatting for oil in the Lindbergh area. Instead of oil, these ventures revealed a new resource, a bed of salt. It was an extension of the McMurray salt bed which is believed to be over 700 miles in length, about one half mile below the surface and about 1000 feet in depth. To compensate for the expense involved in drilling several dry holes, this trio of oil companies envisioned a new project, the production of salt. With water from the North Saskatchewan River, a railway passing by, an ample supply of natural gas, the site here was ideal. They pooled their resources and with encouragement from chemical engineers, a decision was made to incorporate as an independent company, the Alberta Salt Company.

"A construction program was launched, and the million dollar plant was completed late in 1948. It was a very modern, self-contained unit, providing its own water from the river, steam and electrical power and natural gas for fuel. A modern townsite was established for its employees as well as other facilities.

"It produced about 120 tons of salt per day and employed about 40 people. Its products were sold under the trade name Cascade. The official opening was held on March 19,1949. According to a St. Paul Journal news write up, the official opening attracted 2 cabinet ministers, 31 MLAs, and many business leaders and newspaper editors from all parts of Alberta, all arriving by special train from Edmonton. There were many rural and village residents in attendance as well. It was revealed at this opening that the cost of building the salt plant exceeded one million dollars.

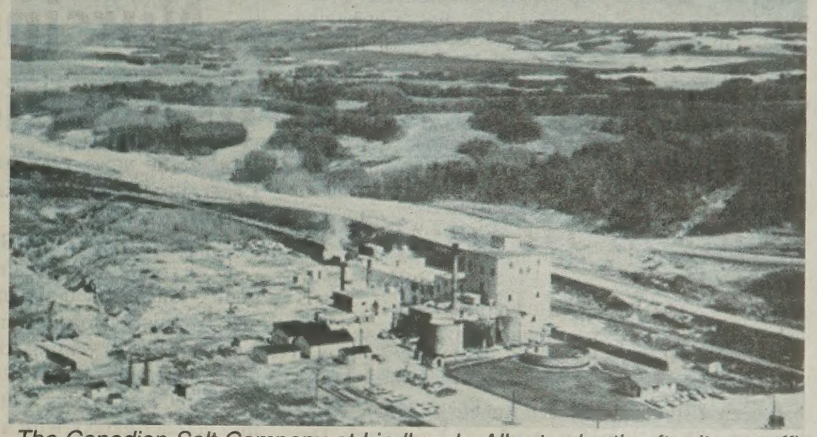
"In June 1950, a new company, The Canadian Salt Co. Ltd., was formed. Mr. H. Milner, who had a controlling interest in the Lindbergh Salt Plant headed the new company. It purchased the salt business of C.I.L. in Windsor and the Alberta Salt Company, and they began to use the Windsor brand name. In 1956, Mr. John D. Williams became the new manager.

"In 1967 the plant expanded its facilities to produce 240 tons of salt per day. In 1973, further expansion was carried out and the plant can produce 360 tons of salt with 60 employees at present (early 1970s). There are about 34 kinds of salt produced here and distributed throughout Western Canada.

"In 1949, the Lindbergh salt plant developed a unique fusing process, the first of its kind anywhere in the world." – This process was apparently developed by the St. Paul Foundry, according to another historical note on the site.

"Today (early 1970s), the plant produces 120-130 tons of fused salt daily, used mostly on our highways, softeners and in packing processes. The salt plant has had to overcome several disadvantages for its location in this area, especially the isolation from main markets and the incomplete railway east of Heinsburg. Now most of the salt is freighted out by truck, which is more efficient. However, the availability of cheap gas here has offset any extra cost involved. Incidentally, a large amount of the gas used here is piped from the wells in the Ferguson Flat district.

"It is very obvious what effect an industry of this size can have on the economy of the surrounding districts. It has provided employment for many local people, enabling them to remain on the farms and work here. It has been an economic asset to local businesses and is the county's largest taxpayer. Aside from economic value it has been a point of interest for visitors from everywhere. Large groups of students come each year from various parts of the province to tour the plant. They are impressed with what they see and Lindbergh and its salt become more meaningful."



The Canadian Salt Company at Lindbergh, Alberta shortly after it was officially opened in 1949.
From the Elk Point Historical Society archives

Local teachers, SPERD board reach agreement

JANICE HUSER
Journal Staff

Teachers of the largest school division in the St. Paul area have come to an agreement with St. Paul Education Regional Division's board of trustees, and a potential strike has been avoided.

The school division's board of trustees and the Alberta Teachers' Association, Greater St. Paul Local #25, announced on Thursday that contract negotiations had been successfully completed.

In a joint media release sent out on Feb. 14, ATA Local President Connie Landsiedel confirmed that on Feb. 4, teachers with SPERD voted overwhelmingly in favour (92 per cent) to accept the memorandum of agreement.

"I was very impressed by the number of teachers who braved the cold weather to come out and hear the presentation and then cast their vote," said Landsiedel, in the media release. She added, "At the meeting, teachers spoke about the difficult economic situation facing many of our communities and their desire to reach a fair settlement without taking job action. Overall, what is important is that our students did not lose out on any time in the classroom."

When speaking to the Journal, Landsiedel said "in this round of negotiations, teachers were looking to improve how much notice substitute teachers are given when their sub booking is cancelled, so they can have time to find another placement. In the end, everyone acted like the professionals they are and came to a resolution that was best for teachers and students."

(Continued on Page 7)

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Editorial

Time to call an election?

The 30th Alberta provincial election must take place sometime between March 1 and May 31 of this year, according to the Elections Act, and we may find out exactly when any day now.

At this time, it's hard to decide just what is a blatant hint at a campaign promise and what is just something that needs doing, no matter who gets in and who doesn't. Some of those things may even have been promised prior to the last election, and have never actually gotten underway, others are new and designed to get the voter's eye pointed in that party's direction.

Actually, it's what they're not saying, and what they may not say until they're voted in and it's too late to change our minds, that might be a problem. Take for instance, a sudden urge to establish a sales tax, from which we've escaped to this point. Does some party leader have one hidden up their sleeve, just waiting to pop out when it would no longer be an election issue?

Are the leaders ready to face a campaign, and do they have enough candidates who are dynamic enough to win the voters' attention on election day? And if they get in, will they have enough clout to do the things they promise so glibly on the campaign trail? Promises are cheap, if you have no chance of having to carry them out.

One thing a provincial election will do, whenever it happens, is to give us a change of scene from the hair-raising political antics in Ottawa and Washington.

Your Views

Four in 10 couples argue over thermostat setting

Energy Efficiency Alberta wanted to promote harmonious relationships last week on Valentine's Day with tips to keep homes comfortable and energy costs down. Here they are, better late than never:

A recent BC Hydro study finds that couples are at odds when it comes to their home heating with four in 10 admitting to arguing about the thermostat setting.

Energy Efficiency Alberta wants to help. We have tips and programs to improve the comfort of your home during the cold winter months without breaking the bank.

Clean or replace your furnace filter - Space heating represents 63 per cent of your home energy use, so it's important to make sure your furnace is running efficiently. If it has to work harder to pull air through a dirty air filter, it will use more energy.

Install a smart or programmable thermostat - A smart or programmable thermostat can reduce heating and cooling costs in your home by up to 10 per cent every year. Instead of fiddling with the heat, smart/programmable thermostats keep you warm and comfy while at home and automatically lower the heat while you're out or asleep.

Check for air leaks around doors and windows - Drafty doors and windows are often the biggest culprits for air leaks. Fortunately, they're also usually easy to fix. Check your existing caulking and weather stripping to see if it's in good condition. If there are gaps, you'll need to fix or replace it.

Get a Home Energy Evaluation - Alberta homeowners can now save on more energy-efficient upgrades for their home with Energy Efficiency Alberta's new Home Energy Plan, which offers higher rebate and more options.

The SNC-Lavalin Affair

What he's said, and she hasn't

Cabinet, Caucus and Confusion

Politics as usual or electioneering?

Way Back When...

Nursing home, arena birthday, diversification, antiquated meters

Here's the news that made the headlines of the Lakeland Review and Elk Point Review for the week of Feb. 18 in...

1989

With $3.8 million already committed for Elk point's long awaited nursing home, Elk Point General and Auxiliary Hospital and Nursing Home District No. 18 was still waiting for approval of an additional $500,000 to meet the structure's $4.4 million price tag. Elk Point Senior Elks sent Consort Comets streaking into another galaxy with a 10-1 win over the visitors in the first game of a two-game, total-point series that started off the north east zone provincial playoffs.

1994

The A. G. Ross Arena was given a 20th birthday party to remember, with MLA Paul Langevin, MP Deborah Grey, Mayor Ed Buck and Minister of Tourism Bob Dowling on hand to re-dedicate the arena to the use of Elk Point and District residents. Town council was now two members short, with the resignation of Betty Callbeck coming less than a month after the resignation of Lawrence Pidluzny, but the remaining five members agreed to continue on shorthanded rather than to hold a by-election.

1999

Elk Point Chamber of Commerce visited town council to offer help in attracting non-oilpatch businesses that would diversify the economy, boost employment and contribute to the tax base. The area's long term care needs were explored at a meeting facilitated by Alberta Community Development, with retaining area hospitals, provision of a level of care between lodges and extended care and expansion of home care programs listed as the top three priorities.

2004

Elk Point OORP joined a long list of donors to the Clarissa Gusnowski Trust Fund, set up to assist the tiny leukemia victim and her family. Town council agreed to join St. Paul's Senior Friendly community initiative and work toward making the community a safer and more convenient place for seniors to live, do business, and participate in community activities.

2009

Christmas Extravaganza volunteers gathered at the Outback 646 Ranch House for an appreciation dinner where chamber of commerce president Sandy Smith told them, "Whether you worked for 20 minutes of 10 hours, we really appreciate all you did." Elk Point skaters brought home six gold medals, six silver and seven bronze from the North East Funskate in Wainwright.

2014

Elk Point's current water meters were "a little bit antiquated," Kathy Lawrence of Accuflow told Elk Point town council. "Back in the day, that was great technology." She went on to outline the newest developments, which would allow the meter reader to drive slowly down the streets with a remote reader on the vehicle's dash which identifies, reads and records information from each meter.

JUNIOR F. G. MILLER CRUSADER Delainee Dielsen was proud to display the silver medal she brought back from the Alberta Winter Games in Canmore, as part of Zone 7's under-15 Volleyball team.

The Elk Point Review publishes a variety of opinions as a contribution to debate on matters of public concern. Unsigned editorials express the view of this newspaper's editorial board which includes the Publisher and the Editor. Signed pieces express the view of the individual writer.

Elk Point Review

5022 - 49 Avenue, Elk Point, AB

Mailing Address:
Box 309, Elk Point, Alberta T0A 1A0
or Box 159, St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A0

Publisher: Clare Gauvreau **Editor:** Vicki Brooker
Email Address: vbrooker@stpaul.greatwest.ca

Vicki Brooker
EDITOR

Melanie McRae
SALES
FRONT DESK

Doug Bassett
SPORTS

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County of St. Paul at 'moderate' risk of wildfire

Education is key to reducing risk

MEREDITH KERR
Review Contributor

Lake lot subdivisions are the largest source of concern for wildfire in the County of St. Paul according to the 'Wildfire Hazard and Risk Assessment' report presented to county council at their regular meeting Feb. 12.

"Due to the high density of them, potentially limited access, and the forest fuels surrounding the structures," said Annette Bugnet from CPP Environmental, who completed the assessment by visiting the Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay, 10 hamlets, and 45 subdivisions located within the county boundaries.

"We looked at values at risk; then a community risk assessment; wildfire behaviour potential which takes in to account fuels, topography and weather to determine potential fire behaviour during the high risk seasons; and then we looked at previous wildfire instances and firefighting capabilities," said Bugnet.

Smith Grove Resort, located on the southern end of Floatingstone Lake is the only community to have a high hazard rating with an inherent risk score of 722. Most other communities are listed as moderate hazards, with four communities earning a low hazard rating. Owlseye has the lowest risk with a score of 228. The average score is 495 and the median is 504. An inherent risk score between 300 and 701 is considered moderate.

"So stuff like a lot of coniferous fuels [spruce/pine], which means a lot of ladder fuels that really ups the risk, single means of egress, high density of houses, things like that really ramped up the risk in that community [Smith Grove Resort]," said Bugnet.

"In low risk communities you find they're more deciduous vegetation like aspen, a lot of them are wide open with really low density of houses, possibly more than one access in to the community. Also how mature the community is, if it's really new there isn't usually a lot of vegetation," said Bugnet.

One positive she noted is the agricultural land throughout the county creates a lot of natural firebreaks around the communities.

"So it would really slow it down or potentially stop it," said Bugnet.

She also said that the six fire departments in the county are adequately trained and equipped for wildfire suppression.

In order to reduce the fire risk for many of the communities in the county, Bugnet recommended educating residents about fire safety and hazard management.

"This is really crucial because anywhere you go a high percentage of wildfires are human caused, so educating the public on what they can do to mitigate that, when the high fire seasons are, stuff like that," said Bugnet.

St. Paul Deputy Fire Chief Henry Thomson was present at the meeting, along with the chiefs of all the fire departments in the county. He agreed with Bugnet that public education is the appropriate next step.

"Once you get in to vegetation management and things like that, you're getting in to environmental studies and everything that goes with that, and I think education is where we need to be, people knowing about the zones around their houses," said Thomson.

The Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta has grant programs and education materials available.

County of St. Paul Chief Administrative Officer Sheila Kitz suggested perhaps fire education could be a part of the block parties FCSS is planning to do in some of the subdivisions and hamlets over the summer. Thomson responded positively to involvement in the block parties, but reiterated his belief fire services should be the group in charge of any fire education in the county.

"If we're going to educate people I think some time in April would be more when it's on their mind. July and August people are on holidays, so I think our target would be April and early May," said Thomson.

Based on the schedule for the grant being discussed, any education funded through the provincial FireSmart program would likely be rolling out for the 2020 fire season.

"Why reinvent the wheel if there's brochures already available. The biggest thing I'm seeing is those hotspot areas with the most potential for serious impact in those lake subdivisions. So even to get some literature available to go with our block parties this year and then work on something on a larger scale for the future," said Div. 1 Coun. Darrell Younghans.

One idea Thomson discussed with council was training some of the volunteer fire fighters to do the hazard assessment for individual properties so homeowners and farmers who may not know where to start to make their property safer could have some guidance.

"I think it's more important that we get fire fighter engagement, and part of the application [for the grant] could be that we're going to be paying our volunteer firefighters to go out and do these," said Thomson.

"Are there issues that should be addressed and are there things we could be doing, yes, but are we Fort McMurray or Slave Lake? No, we're not as a region," said Thomson.

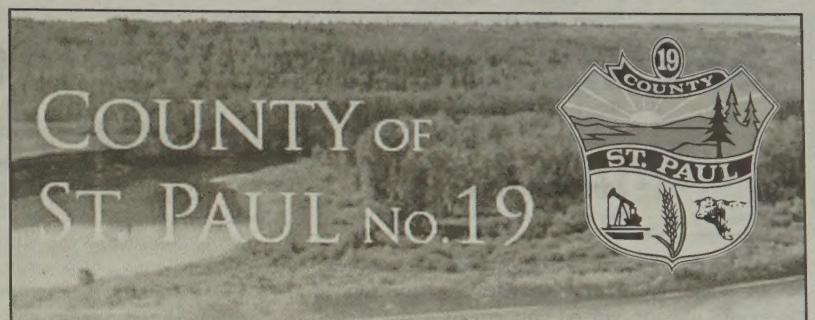
Fish and Game looks at Lac Delorme access

In a letter to County of St. Paul council, St. Paul Fish and Game Association requested help constructing a road access to Lac Delorme, also called George's Lake, located east of Lac St. Cyr.

"Currently fish stocking has been stopped due to poor access to the lakeshore. Further, with increased water levels the perimeter access for shore angling or for boat access has been restricted. By improving the road a distance of 3,00m for fish stocking and for angler access for small boats would result in increased angling opportunities in Alberta," reads the letter, presented to council during the Feb. 12 monthly meeting.

"There's a trail that goes in to there about 300 meters off the road but it's now been flooded and too wet," said Division 3 Coun. Cliff Martin.

(Continued on Page 8)



HIGHLIGHTS

February 12, 2019 Council Meeting

Bylaws - Intermunicipal Development Plan with the County's Rural neighbours - Lac La Biche County, MD of Bonnyville, County of Vermilion River, County of Two Hills and Smoky Lake County have been approved by Council. The bylaws can be viewed on the County website.

Council approved fee Schedule Bylaw 2019-07 which includes a change to gravel rates from $20 to $15/yard self-haul from the County Public Works yard.

Borrowing Bylaw 2018-28, for grading and base-paving two miles of Township Road 582 from Highway 881 to 57th Street in the Town of St. Paul, was given second and third readings, as amended. Prior to proceeding to second reading, an administrative error on page two of the bylaw was corrected. If the County is successful with their 2019 Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP) Grant application, the borrowing bylaw will be required to fund the unfunded portion of the project.

Cold Mix Tender – Council received three tenders for mixing up to 70,000 tonne of cold mix. Council accepted the lowest tender of $13.25/tonne from Black Track Paving.

Volunteer Income Tax Program – The County of St. Paul and Elk Point FCSS partnered with Canada Revenue Agency is offering the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program for low income residents within the County of St. Paul and Town of Elk Point. Trained volunteers will complete income tax returns free of charge for – single earning up to $30,000; couple earning up to $40,000; adult with one child earning up to $35,000 ($2,500 for each additional dependent). Beginning March 1, residents qualifying for this service can drop off their taxes at the County Office or Elk Point FCSS office during business hours.

Wildfire Hazard and Risk Assessment – The County received a grant through the Fire Resource Improvement Association of Alberta to do a Wildlife Hazard and Risk Assessment. A consultant was hired, and they visited 56 communities – 45 subdivisions, 10 hamlets and the Summer Village of Horseshoe Bay. Council agreed that the next step is to provide literature and begin an education program to help the public assess their property for fire risks. The County will consider applying for another grant to carry the education process further.

Funding

- $300 – St. Paul Desna Ukrainian Dance Club
- $480 – St. Paul & District Hospital Foundation
- $1,000 – St. Paul Senior Citizens' Centre Transportation Grant
- $1,000 – Elk Point Minor Hockey – Host Atom Provincials
- $1,000 – St. Paul Regional High School – Host Provincial Curling

For more information contact
Sheila Kitz, CAO, County of St. Paul
At 780-645-3301, ext 208

SPERD extends inclement weather allowance for bus contractors

JANICE HUSER
Review Contributor

Following a stretch of frigidly cold days earlier this month, some bus contractors with St. Paul Education Regional Division voiced concern over the fact they have already maxed out the number of inclement weather days they receive an allowance for.

During the week of Feb. 4 to 8, SPERD made division-wide decisions to cancel all rural buses on four of the five regularly schedule school days because temperatures dipped below -40C. Some SPERD operated buses remained cancelled on the Friday due to continued cold weather.

During the Feb. 13 SPERD board meeting, Superintendent Glen Brodziak spoke about how the cold, snowy weather resulted in the division making decisions to cancel rural buses. He explained the first cancellation occurred as a result of the cold, but also was the result of a recent snowfall that had happened over the weekend.

Some days, the decision was made to cancel buses for the next day earlier in the day, while other times the decision was made later on.

A policy with bus contractors states contractors are allowed four inclement weather days per year where SPERD will still pay $100/day as an allowance. At this point in the season, bus contractors are maxed out on their allowance due to the division cancelling buses for four consecutive days.

It's hard to say if buses would have run had SPERD not made the decision to cancel them, acknowledged board chair Heather Starosielski. Road conditions, temperatures, and even cell phone reception in case of an emergency or break-down, can vary greatly from one end of the division to the other, and those factors play into the decisions bus drivers make.

Having buses cancelled four days in an a row is an "anomaly," said Starosielski. The cost associated with cancelling buses on inclement weather days, and paying contractors the allowance is $3,000/day for the division.

Realistically, there could be more inclement weather days in the months ahead, said Starosielski, as she acknowledged bus contractors' concerns.

Secretary-Treasurer Jean Champagne noted the division doesn't want contractors having to think twice when making a decision about running on a day when there is inclement weather. He added that he doesn't recall a time when SPERD had to cancel buses for four consecutive days.

Starosielski said she felt the division has to put value on the fact that bus drivers are "still sitting on stand-by" when the division makes the decision to cancel buses due to inclement weather. Value still needs to be put on the drivers, even when they aren't running, she added.

A motion to provide the $100/day allowance on future days that the division cancels routes due to weather, for the remainder of the 2018-19 school year, was carried.

Further discussion between the board and administration took place regarding the fact that in-town St. Paul buses continued to operate while rural buses were cancelled. Brodziak contacted all SPERD principals and asked them for a ballpark number on attendance during the four days when buses were cancelled.

While there was a noticeable difference in attendance at the St. Paul schools, it could be due to a number of factors, said Brodziak. But, the higher attendance at the schools does lend to the reasoning that in-town buses continue to run during inclement weather when rural buses are cancelled. As for safety when considering in-town buses, there are more options to quickly get a back-up bus and keep kids warm if something were to happen in town, said Brodziak.

Attendance

During his superintendent's report, Brodziak read off the approximate attendance numbers he had received from area schools. Those rough numbers include: Myrnam - 35 students; Ashmont Elementary - 15 students; Ashmont Secondary - 15 students; F. G. Miller (Elk Point) - 55 students; Elk Point Elementary - 100 students; Mallaig School - 35 students; Two Hills School - 70 students; Heinsburg - 10 students; Two Hills Mennonite - 170 students; St. Paul Elementary - 210 students; Racette Junior High - 135 students; Glen Avon School - 275 students; St. Paul Regional High School - 200 students.

During discussions it was also noted that teachers in the division made the best of the situation during week of cold weather, with some putting class materials online and using technology to their advantage to reach students who didn't attend regular classes.

"There is learning happening," said trustee Rhonda Lafrance.

Vaping, sharing of intimate images noted in area schools

St. Paul Education Regional Division has updated two of its policies, aimed directly at students.

Letters were sent home to parents specifically speaking on the division's vaping policy, and the sharing of intimate images of other students. While policies already existed in respect to both issues, the letters were meant to be more direct in getting the message across.

"Discipline issues continue to arise surrounding students taking, requesting, and sharing nude or partially nude photo/videos," reads the letter. "As parents and educators, we must remind our children/students that one an image is sent, it can never be retrieved."

(Continued on Page 8)

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SPERD concerned with St. Paul traffic

JANICE HUSER
Review Contributor

Traffic concerns along 46th Avenue in St. Paul were brought forward during the Feb. 13 St. Paul Education Regional Division (SPERD) board meeting, citing concerns over the speed that traffic moves along the stretch of road.

The stretch of road being discussed falls between 48th Street and 44th Street. The intersection at 48th Street and 46th Avenue has a four-way stop, but there are no other stops signs until motorists arrive at 44th Street, which is where St. Paul Regional High School is located.

"46th Avenue traditionally is almost a ring road in St. Paul," said Superintendent Glen Brodziak.

Board chair Heather Starosielski said a concern was brought forward from the school division's transportation department, citing concerns over the increased speed that traffic flows through the area.

"The flow of traffic is quite quick," said Starosielski, adding, "It's pretty much in the middle of all our schools."

While SPERD didn't have a specific recommendation on the issue, the board agreed the issue could be brought to the Town of St. Paul's attention.

Starosielski admitted that she wasn't sure if there had been any residential concerns.

"I think we just need to bring (the town) the concern," said Starosielski.

Strobe lights

Following the Humbolt Broncos bus collision in April of 2018, and a school bus collision that occurred near Thorhild in March of 2018 and claimed the life of a student, SPERD board trustees agreed to allow school buses to have strobe lights on at all times when children are on the buses, in an effort to make the buses more visible and increase safety.

At the time, it was noted that other divisions already do this as common practice.

During last week's board meeting, the issue was brought up again, with Brodziak acknowledging he knew at the time that the practice of keeping the strobe lights on all the time was illegal. He further acknowledged he should have consulted with the board on that specific piece of information.

The director of transportation with SPERD was informed by Commercial Vehicle Enforcement that the strobe lights on buses should only be turned on in inclement weather, and that information has been passed on to school bus drivers, said Brodziak in his superintendent's report.

Calendar

The 2019-20 school calendar was up for discussion at the Feb. 13 SPERD board meeting, as Draft 4 was presented to the board.

While there wasn't a lot of feedback following the first draft being presented to the board, schools and parent councils, the calendar had to be looked at once administration noticed spring break conflicted with diploma writing days.

The days set aside for diploma exams in April are often used by students who need to re-write an exam, students who want to challenge the exam, or those completing online courses, among other situations.

"We have a number of students actually writing in April," said Superintendent Glen Brodziak.

The draft recommended that spring break be moved to March 23. The change results in one less instructional day in the second semester.

Trustee Rhonda Lafrance said she would like to bring the draft back to parent councils before approving it. Trustee Dwight Wiebe agreed.

Brodziak said administration looked up about 16 other school division calendars to see what they are doing, and "it was all over the board."

While diploma dates have taken place in April for a while, it is only within the last couple of years that students within SPERD are taking advantage of those writing dates, heard the board. A motion to table the calendar until March was carried.

Teachers

(Continued from Page 3)

SPERD trustees voted unanimously to accept the agreement at the regular board meeting on Feb. 13.

"The final items on the table included adding a new paid leave day to take care of family needs, clarifying the approval process for taking personal days off, substitute teacher cancellation provisions, and making an adjustment to principal allowances," explained board chair Heather Starosielski, when speaking to the Journal, last week.

She noted that minor changes were made to the two previous agreements that had been voted down by teachers, in order to reach the agreement that has now been approved.

"We would like to thank our local teachers, and we are very grateful an agreement has been reached. Now, we can continue to focus on students and their learning," said Starosielski.

In the media release, board Chair Heather Starosielski said, "The new two-tier bargaining model presented some challenges for both parties. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank our community and stakeholders for their patience throughout this negotiation process. We trust we have reached a fair deal with our teachers that takes into account the best interests of our students, the communities we serve, and the constraints of our budget."

Moving forward, the process will continue to be constricted by the terms of the two-tiered bargaining model that has been adopted provincially. In this model, larger monetary items are negotiated at the provincial level, leaving very little room for substantial negotiations at the local level, explained Starosielski.

Background

Just before the Christmas break, teachers had voted in favour of authorizing a strike vote.

The St. Paul Education Regional Division consists of teachers in Ashmont, Mallaig, Elk Point, Heinsburg, Myrnam, Two Hills and area, and the majority of St. Paul schools.

The other local school division, Conseil scolaire Centre-Est, which is made up of francophone schools in the area, including École du Sommet in St. Paul, has yet to reach a contract agreement with its teachers.

Busy Wednesday at Elk Point Library

Wednesday, Feb. 13 was an extra busy day at the library as the ECDC hosted their Valentine's Day party, with cookie decorating, crafts, stories and snacks, with a number of older youngsters joining in the fun after school closed early that afternoon due to the teachers' convention.

MEANWHILE, IN THE PROGRAM ROOM, the monthly Library Tea was underway, saluting curlers of the past, with an array of vintage photos to browse through and identify their friends from long ago.

SPERD

(Continued from Page 6)

In the case of sharing intimate images, the issue can often go beyond the school division's policies and end up in the hands of RCMP. It is a criminal offence to knowingly share or publish intimate images of a person without that person's consent, reads the letter.

"It's more than just our rules," said board chair Heather Starosielski, when the issue was brought up at the Feb. 13 board meeting.

It goes into the realm of child pornography, said Superintendent Glen Brodziak. He added that he's been told that conviction rates on this type of matter are actually up.

"This is something you can't take back one it's out there," said Brodziak, adding, parents need to talk to their children about the issue.

While digital citizenship is part of the schools' curriculum, "We continue to deal with students sharing inappropriate images," reads the letter. Students who share nude or partially nude images are given a three to five day out of school suspension.

The other issue the division has addressed through a letter is vaping in schools and on school buses.

"Vaping is a concern in our schools," said Brodziak, during last week's meeting. He noted that in one case, a fire alarm went off at St. Paul Regional High School due to someone vaping in the school.

Information was sent out to parents on Feb. 11.

"Recently, a number of St. Paul Education junior and senior high schools have reported an increase in student use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and/or vaporizers," reads the letter. The act of inhaling and exhaling the aerosol is commonly referred to as vaping.

The letter was also meant to inform parents that there are health risks involved in using the nicotine products, and the use of the products has become more noted in schools, including washrooms, change rooms, common areas, and even on the bus.

Simply put, "vaping and the use of all tobacco products are prohibited in all St. Paul Education Division school," reads the letter.

Schools have been doing increased supervision, and any students caught vaping inside the school or on the bus will be given an automatic three-day out of school suspension. Vaping THC results in a five-day out of school suspension.

"We're going to enforce these consequences," said Brodziak.

County

(Continued from Page 5)

"So they're going to apply for the approvals because it's on government land to get through there. They want a letter of support from us and if they do get the approvals they might want us to participate."

According to the letter, St. Paul Fish and Game Association is also applying for a grant from the Alberta Conservation Association.

Coun. Maxine Fodness made the motion to provide the organization with a letter of support for the project, that motion carried unanimously. A motion by Darrell Younghans to table the request to construct the road and parking lot for more information was also carried.

Price set for Railway Ave

Div. 6 Coun. Laurent Amyotte made a motion to set the price of land along Railway Ave. in Mallaig at $2,000 per acre and direct administration to obtain a formal quote for the survey work. That motion was carried following a discussion of the potential sale.

The land in question, approximately 3.2 acres, was acquired by the County of St. Paul from N.E. Muni Corr to correct the encroachment of Railway Ave. The county now wants to sell unused portions of the land to the adjacent landowners along the parcel of land.

According to County of St. Paul Chief Administrative Officer Sheila Kitz, the response to a letter the county sent to landowners in November to gauge interest in purchasing the land was mixed.

"Eight landowners that might, four that did not, and five that did not respond," she said. There are a total of 17 landowners, and according to Kitz the preliminary quote for the survey was approximately $23,000. If the sale happens, each landowner would pay their portion of the survey costs, as well as the cost of whatever portion of the 3.2 acres is adjacent to their existing lot.

According to Kitz, the concerns raised by landowners in their response were regarding increased taxes, and the cost of acquiring the land.

"It's hard for them to say yes without knowing what it will cost," said Amyotte, before making his motion.

Administration will send letters to the landowners informing them of what their exact expected costs would be, and detailing why it would be in their interest to purchase the land.

Intermunicipal Development Plans adopted

There were no objections raised at the hearings for the Intermunicipal Development Plans the County of St. Paul has been working on with Lac La Biche County, the M.D. of Bonnyville, County of Vermilion River, County of Two Hills, and Smoky Lake County.

The agreements lay out a framework for development in areas near the borders of neighbouring municipalities. All five agreements were given second and third reading at the regular council meeting on Feb. 12.

Donations

A number of groups received donations following the county council meeting on Feb. 12.

St. Paul Senior Citizens' Centre received $1,000 towards transportation costs for the educational and cultural trips they provide to their members.

The St. Paul Ukrainian Dance Club received $300 towards the cost of ribbons for their 26th Annual Ukrainian Dance Festival taking place April 6.

County council voted to purchase a table of eight and donate a silent auction item for the St. Paul and District Hospital Foundation Gala taking place March 3.

County council will sponsor two teams at the Glendon Pyrogy Bonspiel March 9. The cost of the sponsorship is $250.

And the Mannawanis Native Friendship Centre will receive a silent auction item for their talent show jamboree on March 9.